1: Cooper E-4 (no date) 1946 SH5 Tehuelche SH5



Fitz-Roy (1839, 2:172) reported that the *Alacaluf* traded pieces of iron pyrites, used for striking fire, to the *Tehuelche*.

SOCIAL LIFE

**Marriage and the family.**—Direct information is available only for the later *Tehuelche;* our chief information on the domestic culture of the later *Tehuelche* comes from Sánchez Labrador, Viedma, Fitz-Roy, Musters, and Spegazzini.

Premarital chastity was seemingly rather strictly observed by girls. They were free to choose their husbands. Fitz-Roy (1839, 2:152) reported that sometimes girls were betrothed while very young [child betrothal?]. Boys married around the age of 20; girls from 15 to 18 or so. The groom gave presents to the bride's father or parents; these presents were in some measure at least a bride-price; the father or parents of the bride also gave presents of equal value, which in case of later separation were the property of the bride (Musters, 1871, pp. 177–178; 1872, p. 201). The girl was brought by her father or the groom to the latter's toldo, where a wedding feast was given, including mares' meat. It was unlucky for any of the offal or meat of the mares to be eaten by the dogs. The shaman sang and gave advice at weddings. Residence was generally patrilocal. According to Viedma (1837 b, p. 74), a "cacique" always married the daughter or sister of another cacique.

Marriage was mostly monogamous. Some men, however, had two wives; rarely three in the later 19th century, but earlier some had "four, five, or even more" (Fitz-Roy, 1839, 2:152), and even five to eight (Sánchez Labrador, 1936, p. 73). No polyandry is reported (however, see *Poyá*, p. 160); nor is either the sororate or levirate.

Wives were generally well treated as well as loved. Wife beating was very rare. Adultery was not uncommon; in case of unfaithfulness on the part of a wife, her paramour suffered the penalty, not she (Viedma, 1837 b, p. 74). Divorce was uncommon, being usually sought by the wife. A man was not allowed to look toward his father-in-law when in conversation with him (Musters, 1871, p. 184). The aged were respected and well cared for.

**Etiquette.**—Proper names were not mentioned (Bourne, 1853, p. 150). Hospitality was the rule, to traveling strangers as well as to friends. Certain formalities were observed when two parties approached and came together, including answers to the host's questions before delivering a message (Musters, 1871, pp. 184–185). The relative absence of formalities on entering a tent (Moreno, 1879, p. 226) contrasted with *Araucanian* etiquette in this regard.

Cleanliness of body was considered desirable, and bathing in the river was common; there was also a certain ideal of toldo cleanliness;

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Lista, 1879 b, p. 76; Roncagli, 1884, p. 776; Spegazzini, 1884, p. 237.) Bloodletting was commonly resorted to. The resin of Schinus *Duvaua dependens*) was chewed for health purposes (Muñiz, 1917, p. 214; cf. Pineda, 1914, p. 9). Guanaco bezoars were utilized for medicinal purposes (Musters, 1871, p. 126; King, 1839, 1:117, for bowel complaints). Like the *Puelche* and the *Araucanians*, the *Tehuelche* had numbers for "100" and "1,000" taken from *Quechua*.

### POYA CULTURE

Most of our extremely fragmentary data on *Poya* culture are derived from Diego Florez de León (1898), Gerónimo Pietas (1846), Miguel de Olivares (1874), Gómez de Vidaurre (1889), and Menendez (*in* Fonck, 1900). The main passages from the first four are reproduced in full and their anthropological content critically discussed and interpreted by Vignati (1939 a; cf. also Latchman, 1929–30, 64:220–222).

**Subsistence activities.**—Food consisted of animals, birds, and certain roots from which a flour was made; later, beef. The two earlier sources, Florez de León and Pietas, made no mention of agriculture; Olivares (1874, p. 511) stated that the *Poya* had "a little grain" [cultivated by them!]; Menendez (*in* Fonck, 1900, p. 319), that the "Puelche" [probably *Poya*] of Lake Nahuel-huapí in 1792 had some quinoa, wheat, and barley, that they did not cultivate the ground, but that they used to throw seeds on the ground along streams and what came up was gathered by the first who came along.

Skin bags served as water containers. An alcoholic beverage was made of wild fruits.

Hunting and fighting weapons were the bow and arrow and bolas. Dogs were used in hunting. Horses and cattle were early introduced.

**Shelters.**—Tents were of skins.

**Clothing and ornaments.**—Clothing was made of guanaco, fox, and ostrich skins, and included a large mantle and a smaller pubic covering. One Indian, from inland, met by Florez de León, "had his nose pierced like the people of Perú" (1898, p. 256)—no doubt, with his septum pierced.

**Transportation.**—Inflated guanaco skins were used in crossing rivers on horseback.

**Social and political life.**—Not only polygyny, but also polyandry was permitted (Olivares, 1874, p. 511; Vidaurre, 1889, p. 301); when one husband went away hunting, the other took his place. According to Olivares (1874, p. 512), sodomy was practiced; so, too, father-daughter incest (ibid.), though not approved by public opinion. Each band had its own headman, with persuasive rather than mandatory powers.

2: Musters T-5 (1869-1870)1873
SH5 Tehuelche SH5



bravery ample proof will afterwards be given; but, like all drunkards, he was uncertain and not to be depended on. This veritable old Blue Beard informed me that he had been married six times; certainly, if all his wives were of the appearance and disposition of his last venture, it is not to be wondered at if he disposed of the former ones; for an uglier, dirtier, more contumacious old hag had never burdened the earth with her weight, owing probably to which latter quality, or quantity, she never, if she could possibly help it, quitted her room. Early in June, an Indian, known in Santa Cruz as El Sourdo, or the left-handed man, came across the river and pitched his toldo on the island. He was the husband of two wives, who lived together in perfect felicity and took care of one another's children. This Indian was, as most of them are, very ingenious in working wood and silver, and was a good addition to our hunting parties; he also quickly learned to play at brag. Casimiro would never descend from his lofty pinnacle of self-importance so far as to enter the kitchen when the general revels were held, but occasionally joined Mr. Clarke and myself at supper and sat telling stories for an hour or two.

The sketch of our life at Pabon would be very incomplete without asking the reader to accompany us on a hunting excursion; so I will describe one which took place after El Sourdo had arrived on the island. Game had become very scarce in our immediate vicinity, and our only farinaceous food was black beans varied by maize, which was too troublesome in the preparation to be much used. The meat went wonderfully quickly, so we determined to extend the sphere of the hunting a little more afield. Accordingly, one fine frosty morning at daylight, the horses were brought up, caught, and saddled, mantles and spurs donned, and eight of us, including the two Indians, Casimiro and El Sourdo, set off to make a circle, *i.e.*, enclose and drive an area of land on the southern shore of the river, finishing at the Missionaries'

2: Musters T-5 (1869-1870) 1873
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on his best horse, decorated with silver ornaments—if he possesses any—proceeds to the toldo of his intended, and hands over the gifts. The parents of the bride then return gifts of an equal value, which, however, in the event of a separation (a rare event), become the property of the bride. After this the bride is escorted by the bridegroom to his toldo, amidst the cheers of his friends and the singing of the women. Mares are usually then slaughtered and eaten on the spot, great care being taken that the dogs do not touch any of the meat or offal, as it is considered unlucky. The head, backbone, tail, together with the heart and liver, are taken up to the top of a neighbouring hill, as an offering to the Gualichu, or evil spirit. An Indian is allowed to have as many wives as he can support, but it is rare to find a man with more than two, and they generally only have one.

On the death of a Tehuelche all his horses, dogs, and other animals are killed, his ponchos, ornaments, bolas, and all other personal belongings are placed in a heap and burned, the widow and other womankind keeping up a dismal wailing, and crying out loud in the most melancholy manner. The meat of the horses is distributed amongst the relations on both sides; and the widow, who cuts her hair short in front and assumes black paint, repairs, bag and baggage, to the toldo of her relations, or if she has none in the party, to the toldo of the chief.

The body is sewn up in a mantle, poncho, or coat of mail, if the deceased possessed one, and is taken away by some of the relations and buried in a sitting posture, its face to the east, a cairn of stones being erected over the place, varying in size according to the wealth and influence of the deceased. I have never seen any of the graves described in Mr. Wood's work, but as my travels as a rule were confined to the interior, they may exist in some part of the sea-coast; nor did the exhumation and removal of the body ever come under my notice, and I should be inclined to doubt its being ever practised by the Tehuelches, inasmuch as it is a rule amongst

3: Musters T-5 (1869-1870)1872
SH5 Tehuelche SH5



The same ceremonial is observed on the attainment of puberty by a girl. The important event is announced by her father to the cacique, who thereupon notifies it to the doctor. The girl herself is placed in the "pretty-house", and no one allowed to enter it. Marriages amongst the Tehuelches are always those of inclination, and if the damsel does not like the suitor to her hand, her parents never force her to comply with their wishes, although the match may be an advantageous one. The usual custom is for the bridegroom, after he has secured the consent of his damsel, to send either a brother or some intimate friend to the parents, offering so many mares, horses, or silver ornaments for the bride. If the parents consider the match desirable, as soon after as circumstances will permit, the bridegroom, dressed in his best, and mounted on his best horse, proceeds to the toldo of his intended, and hands over the gifts; the parents then return gifts of equivalent value, which, however, in the event of a separation, are the property of the bride. After this the bride is escorted by the bridegroom to his toldo, amongst the cheers of his friends, and the singing of the women. Mares are generally then slaughtered, and a feast takes place. The animals being killed, cooked, and eaten on the spot, great care being taken that the dogs do not touch any of the meat or offal, as it is considered unlucky. The head, backbone, and tail, together with the heart and liver, are taken up to the top of a neighbouring hill, as an offering to the "Gualychu", or evil spirit. An Indian is allowed to have as many wives as he can support. However, it is rare to find a man with more than two, and they more generally only have one.

On the death of a Tehuelche all his horses, dogs, and other animals are killed; his ponchos, if he possesses any ornaments, bolas, and other belongings, are placed in a heap and burned, the widow and other womenkind keeping up a dismal wailing, and crying out loud in the most melancholy manner. The meat of the horses is distributed amongst the relations; and the widow (who cuts her hair short in front, and assumes black paint) repairs bag and baggage to the toldo of her relations, if she has any, if not, to that of the chief. The body, sown up in a mantle, poncho, or coat of mail, if the deceased possessed one, is taken away by some of the relations, and buried in a sitting posture with its face to the east, a cairn of stones being generally erected over the place. I have never seen any of the graves described in Mr. Wood's book; but as I never travelled much by the sea-coast, they may exist and be the burial-places of some of the Pampa tribe.

A curious custom prevails amongst these Indians with regard to their children. If a child hurts itself while playing, mares are slaughtered as a sort of thanksoffering that it did not die, a pretty



[i.e. as for a newborn child.—Analyst]

5: Bourne T-5 (1849)1874
SH5 Tehuelche SH5



609 with my whole available force and weight; but the disparity between human strength and horse power, stimulated to its utmost by the spur, was too great. I begged the men in the boats to come again the next morning, and on no account to leave me, which they solemnly promised.

592 I was now hurried back into the country five or six miles, and at last reached an Indian village, and was set down by the old chief at his wigwam. He gave me in charge to one of his squaws, who ordered me into the hut and bade me sit down on the ground. While sitting there, and casting an inquisitive glance around the rude habitation, my attention was suddenly attracted to what appeared to be several pairs of eyes in a dark corner, shining with a strange brilliancy. I speculated silently on the sight, much doubting whether they belonged to human beings or to wild beasts; but, on carefully reconnoitring, I discovered that they belonged to three huge women. Further investigations disclosed a number of dark-skinned boys and girls, of divers ages and sizes, playing and [291] capering about the premises, in a state of perfect nudity. It took a considerable time to make out these, or any other objects, distinctly, owing to the darkness of the hut. Presently the chief, the patriarch of the tribe, entered [595] his habitation, and began a conversation, in his peculiar dialect, with his wives. He spoke in a low, guttural tone, in words the purport of which I could not gather. I was in no mood for conversation, but would have been much gratified by learning his version of the day's "stroke of business."

372 And now a few dry sticks and a bunch of dry grass were brought, mine host drew from a convenient repos-

5: Bourne T-5 (1849)1874
SH5 Tehuelche SH5



ous household, however, seemed to enjoy immense satisfaction; and jabbered and grunted, and played their antics, and exchanged grimaces, as complacently as if they breathed a highly exhilarating atmosphere.

My meditations and observations were shortly interrupted by preparations for a meal. The chief's better half — or rather fifth part, for he had four wives — superintended the culinary operations, which were as rude and simple as the hut where they were carried on. And now my fancy began to conjure up visions of the beef, fowls and eggs, the promise of which had lured my men from the boat, — had proved stronger than the suggestions of prudence, and had made me a prisoner. But these dainties, if they existed anywhere within the chief's jurisdiction, were just at present reserved. The old hag threw down from the top of one of the stakes that supported the tent the quarter of some animal; whether dog, guanaco, or whatever, was past imagining. She slashed right and left, with might and main, an old copper knife, till it was divided into several pieces. Then taking a number of crotched sticks, about two feet long, and sharpened at all their points, she inserted the forked ends into pieces of the meat, and drove the opposite points into the ground near the fire; which, though sufficient to smoke and comfortably *warm* the mess, was too feeble to roast it. At all events, time was too precious, or their unsophisticated appetites were too craving, to wait for such an operation; and the raw morsels were quickly snatched from the smoke, torn into bits by her dirty hands, and thrown upon the ground before us. The Indians seized them with avidity, and tossed a bit to me; but what could I do with

5: Bourne T-5 (1849)1874
SH5 Tehuelche SH5



earnest business that calls their faculties into full exercise, their features light up with unexpected intelligence and animation. In fact, as one becomes familiar with them, he will not fail to detect an habitual expression of "secretiveness" and duplicity, which he will wonder he did not observe sooner. They are almost as imitative as monkeys, and are all great liars; falsehood is universal and inveterate with men, women and children. The youngest seem to inherit the taint, and vie with the oldest in displaying it. The detection of a falsehood gives them no shame or uneasiness. To these traits should be added a thorough-paced treachery, and, what might seem rather inconsistent with their other qualities, a large share of vanity, and an immoderate love of praise. They are excessively filthy in their personal habits. Hydrophobia, so to speak, is a prevailing distemper; they never wash themselves. Hands and faces are covered with dirt, so thick, and of such ancient deposit, that their natural color only appears in spots, laid bare by the mechanical loosening and displacement of some of the strata, which curiously variegates the surface. It is hardly necessary to remark that such a condition of the skin is highly favorable to the increase and multiplication of "the moving creature that hath life," wherewith their persons are abundantly peopled.

The women are proportionally smaller than the men, and rather inclined to embonpoint. The old chief had four wives, though he had probably never heard of Mahomet or his domestic laws. The rest of the tribe had only one wife apiece. The women erect the wigwams, provide fuel and cook,—if the operation should be dignified with that name,—in short, all the drudgery falls to their lot They are

invasion by his neighbors. As a matter of fact the unfortunate chief's family does not lose its right to its land, and with the passage of time it often happens that some descendant will re-establish the colony which his father, grandfather or brother destroyed either by bad luck or bad conduct. When a chief becomes old and unable to fulfill the obligations of his position he hands over his authority to a successor.

Marriages are made by a man's buying his wife from her father or from some other under whose guardianship she may be, and in proportion to her rank, good looks, conduct, etc. she is either more or less expensive. Her will is not taken into account for this transaction by her father or guardian, and she cannot set herself against her own sale. Each man may have one, two, or more wives of his own, depending on his wealth, but only rarely does a man have more than one unless he be a chief or an Indian of great power. Three is the greatest number of wives which any man gets to possess, and each husband has the right of selling his wives to another, but this resale makes the woman of little worth, and for that reason she is sold very cheaply; poor men only buy women in this way since they lack the funds to buy them first-hand. It is not considered improper to sell a woman to a relative, unless it be to the woman's son or brother, all other relatives being eligible as buyers. Many are the marriages of this type which are consumated because of the expense involved in procuring an unmarried woman. Single women, while they are yet young and have hopes of being married keep their virginity, but should these hopes vanish, they will have sex relations promiscuously. Those married women who find that the husband who bought them from their father or guardian is to their liking, are faithful, but should they not like their husbands they become troublesome - [illegible] adultery is not considered a crime unless committed in the husband's presence, and in such a case the adulterer and not the woman is blamed, and even then no punishment is meted out, the husband being easily mollified. The chief always has as a wife the daughter or sister of some other chief, and she is the head wife amongst his others, who must serve her in every way. Even if the chief should tire of his principal wife he may not sell her because it would be considered an insult and cause for an outbreak of war with her relatives. All these head wives are grave in demeanor, given to few words, live secluded in their tents, spend their time in pursuits suitable [74] to their position, and do not take part in the vain conversations of the other Indian women. The men never manhandle the women for any reason, except when drunk, and even in such a condition the chief will never strike his head wife although all the others may well receive their share of blows.